**Racial Equity and Social Justice**

**Introduction**

Climate change has widespread detrimental impacts—on public health, community assets, and the economy. Although all residents of Montgomery County will feel the impacts of climate change, certain groups will feel these impacts more acutely. This discrepancy is referred to as the “climate gap,” which essentially means that certain groups within society, such as people of color and low-income communities, are disproportionately adversely affected by climate change, yet have the least resources and less ability to cope with and respond and adapt to its impacts.

Many factors contribute to increased climate vulnerability, including:

- Poverty and lack of access to financial resources
- Age, disability and chronic illness
- Historical and systemic racism and environmental injustices
- Disparities in accessing decent health care and education
- Poor and inefficient housing and residential settings
- Lack of access to resources such as information, knowledge, and technology
- Limited social networks and connections
- Lack of access to critical services such as water, transportation and energy

These climate impact multipliers make communities that already face inequities even more vulnerable and susceptible to new shocks, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown. The lack of economic, health, and social resilience also results in barriers that make it difficult for climate-vulnerable communities to benefit from actions that aim to reduce or eliminate climate risks.

In considering these vulnerable groups, it is important to explore historical policies and practices that have contributed to disparities and perpetuated the severity of climate change impacts on vulnerable communities, and to understand the current conditions in Montgomery County. Through secondary research and conversations with community groups, the County has created the foundation for genuinely incorporating the concepts of racial equity and social justice into the climate planning process. Ultimately, the CAP aims to address and remedy historical injustices and unfair practices; institute climate actions that reflect the County’s racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity; and ensure that these climate actions are tailored to the needs of all of the County’s residents, in particular those most sensitive to climate change.

**Systemic Racism and Environmental Injustice**

The disproportionate impact of climate change on underserved communities in the U.S. correlates to a history of disinvestment and structurally racist practices. These practices have perpetuated the severity of climate change in vulnerable communities. Although similar reckonings have occurred before in different eras, the U.S. is currently in a moment of racial reckoning that stems from never fully uprooting racism in the country—the genocide of Indigenous people and enslavement of Africans, which have served as the foundation for generations of discriminatory practices, inequality, income disparities, abusive policies, and increased health risks in these communities. This list, while not exhaustive, illustrates that every aspect of Indigenous and Black people’s lives was shaped for generations because of both overt and covert racism in the U.S. Not only have Black and Indigenous people found themselves the recipients of unequal justice, this racial behavior is now targeted toward immigrants, particularly immigrants of color.

Maryland and Montgomery County are not exempt from this sordid national history. Although Maryland did not secede with other southern slave-holding states during the Civil War, the state did enact policies and participate in practices that exacerbated harm in Black communities. Jim Crow laws and former practices such as sharecropping, redlining, exclusionary zoning, restrictive racial deed covenants, siting of environmentally hazardous facilities, and destruction of neighborhoods to build the U.S. Highway System continue to have long-standing and detrimental impacts. This systemic and institutionalized racism developed as a result of a country that, while abolishing slavery, did not recognize Black and Indigenous people as equal citizens deserving of full humanity and economic prosperity.

As racial equity and social justice are intertwined throughout the CAP, it is important to understand historical practices and their associated traumas, as they lay the foundation for the current state of disparities in the U.S., including the disparities in Montgomery County, which are evident in housing, transportation, land use, education, and health care. The following sections explore three key areas of racial inequity: housing and homeownership, access to transportation, and environmental racism.

**Inequity in Housing and Homeownership**

After the abolition of slavery in the U.S., many formerly enslaved Black people were forced into sharecropping. This legalized form of oppression, which did not end until the 1950s, introduced new barriers to economic mobility and home ownership. For the few who did make it off the plantation in search of better opportunity, they found themselves discriminated against and unable to afford housing. Until the Fair Housing Act of 1968, discriminatory tools locked Black people out of the housing market, including outright refusal to sell to Blacks, racially restrictive deed covenants, and redlining Black neighborhoods from access to government loans and services (see Figure 2). These practices put Black people at a further disadvantage because for nearly 100 years they were locked out of participating in what has been deemed a wealth-building tool in the United States—homeownership.
Specifically, in Montgomery County, Silver Spring was a sundown suburb where Black people could not own or rent homes due to racially restrictive deed covenants. It was marketed to white residents fleeing the District of Columbia. Although Black people worked in Silver Spring for government agencies, they were not allowed to move and live there.

Meanwhile, nearby Lyttonsville—a town bearing the namesake of its original property owner, Samuel Lytton, a freed slave—became an enclave for Black families. Despite this, Lyttonsville had no paved roads, running water, or sewer connections until the 1960s. This neglect was fueled by racist Jim Crow policies that have had lasting impacts. Poverty became concentrated in this area.

What started out as a housing access issue in Montgomery County also became a housing affordability issue. Community revitalization in the 1960s spurred gentrification and displaced Black residents who could no longer afford the rising cost of living. In the 1970s, the County attempted to rectify its wrongs in discriminatory housing by passing the first zoning ordinance of its kind in the country. This ordinance required any development of more than 50 units to set aside at least 15% of the housing for low-income residents. While new, affordable housing policies have been enacted in the County since then, housing affordability remains a pressing issue for many in Montgomery County.

Homeownership in Montgomery County is out of reach for many residents. Homeownership for Whites and Asian or Pacific Islanders is about 75% while homeownership for Hispanics is 50% and Blacks 44%. The 2015 American Community Survey found that 67% of homeowners below the median income of $98,314 spent more than 30% of their income on housing-related costs. This background is important context because if people do not own their own homes, they are unable to make many decisions about improving their resilience and adaptation to climate change. Furthermore, for those who are considered house poor (i.e., those who spend a large proportion of their total income on housing), their limited income may not allow them to participate in energy efficiency or resilience incentive programs that have an additional upfront cost burden (see Figure 3).

![Residential Areas Graded by Federal Housing Administration (1936)](image)

**Figure 2:** Recreated 1936 map showing “Approximate Location of Outstanding Commitments of the Federal Housing Administration” in Montgomery County, developed for Thrive 2050

![FHA-Graded Residential Areas By Housing Characteristics](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Newer, high-class subdivision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Newer, better class housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Older, middle class &amp; older, better class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Older, middle class &amp; newer, lower price houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Unregulated, individually built, lowest grade for White residency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Unregulated, scattered housing permitting Black residency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1936 Housing Market Analysis of Washington, D.C., Federal Housing Administration; map recreated by Montgomery County Planning Department (July 2020).

![Residential Areas Graded by Federal Housing Administration (1936)](image)

**Figure 3:** Montgomery County census tracts with average housing-related costs of 30% or greater as a percentage of income

![Legend](image)

- **A** County census tracts with average housing-related costs of 30% or greater as a percentage of income

Figure 3: Montgomery County census tracts with average housing-related costs of 30% or greater as a percentage of income

![Figure 2](image)

**Figure 2:** Recreated 1936 map showing “Approximate Location of Outstanding Commitments of the Federal Housing Administration” in Montgomery County, developed for Thrive 2050.
Inequity in Access to Transportation

Transportation assets in this country have been used to bring people together as well as tear them apart. Adequate transportation can enable people to access jobs, health care, schools, food sources, recreation, and entertainment. However, transportation infrastructure for cars and sometimes rail has historically been located in minority communities in ways that not only break them up but also increase mobile GHG and fugitive emissions that exacerbate respiratory illnesses in these communities. In a county that boasts robust rail and bus service for public transportation, Montgomery County has historically shut out certain communities from transportation mobility.

Tobytown, which is situated near Potomac, is a Black neighborhood in a remote location, that far more than 30 years petitioned for bus service to connect their community with the rest of Montgomery County. Many people in this impoverished community could not afford to own vehicles, and the lack of transportation infrastructure, such as sidewalks or even paved shoulders, made it dangerous for people to walk to the closest bus stop 3 miles away. The lack of access to reliable transportation made the community socially vulnerable because they could not readily access food, jobs, health care, or recreation. After several different approaches to providing transportation had been tried, and failed, in late 2016, the County instituted a new bus route to serve the community.17

While Tobytown faced transportation disparities, other parts of Montgomery County that include Black, Indigenous, people of color, and new immigrant populations are dealing with the impact of congested roadways. As noted earlier, 65% of Montgomery County’s residents commute by car and many of them drive alone. Most of these congested roadways carry thousands of cars per day and are routed through communities that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Children that live 0.2 to 0.3 miles from a highway also experience exaggerated negative health outcomes, including asthma attacks, onset of childhood asthma, premature death, death from cardiovascular diseases, and cardiovascular morbidity.18 Long-term exposure to traffic pollution can increase the risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, dementia, poor cognition, and premature death. In addition to being exposed to negative health impacts, this same population is exposed to greater risk of pedestrian injury or fatality from vehicles, often exacerbated by lack of vehicle and pedestrian infrastructure upgrades.

These vulnerable communities face constant air pollution from vehicle emissions, which not only contribute to climate change but also cause and exacerbate respiratory illnesses. As described in the Health section, vulnerable groups are already more susceptible to life-threatening diseases such as heart disease and diabetes, and living near congested roadways only worsen these conditions. Access to multimodal and electric transportation options across the County could help alleviate these detrimental health outcomes.

Environmental Racism

All of these factors that contribute to climate injustice connect to the broader category of environmental racism. Environmental racism is the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards such as air pollution on people of color. Environmental racism refers to the institutional rules, regulations, policies, and government and corporate decisions that deliberately target certain communities for locally undesirable land uses and lax enforcement of zoning and environmental laws. This targeting results in communities being disproportionately exposed to polluting industries and to toxic and hazardous waste. Environmental racism is caused by several factors, including intentional neglect, the alleged need for a receptacle for pollutants in urban areas, and a lack of institutional power and low land values in areas predominantly populated by historically marginalized communities.19

To address this, the State of Maryland established an Environmental Justice Commission in 2001; however, the commission has been decried by residents as advisory in nature and lacking in substantive action.20 In addition, of the 20 seats available on the Commission, only two are occupied by representatives from the affected environmental justice communities, which the U.S. EPA defines as communities overburdened by environmental harms. As of September 2020, a quarter of the seats remain vacant. Because of this lack of representation by environmental justice communities and the lack of substantive action by the commission, it is not clear if the State of Maryland is adequately addressing these issues as residents had hoped. An effective Environmental Justice Commission would be beneficial for all counties, as environmental issues such as water quality and air pollution that happen in one county have the ability to impact adjacent counties.

In demonstrating a commitment to racial equity and social justice, Montgomery County led a community-inclusive process to develop a Racial Equity and Social Justice Policy that was formally adopted in December 2019. In February 2020, the County confirmed a Chief Equity Officer who holds the responsibility of implementing the Racial Equity and Social Justice Policy.

Montgomery County’s Socioeconomic Profile

While people of color and vulnerable communities have experienced improvements regarding access to education, housing, employment opportunities, transportation, and health care over the past several decades, disparities between groups remain. The sections below portray the current situation in Montgomery County regarding key areas of life, with a focus on vulnerable groups.

Demographics

Montgomery County has been Maryland’s most populous county since 1990. As of July 2019, the County’s total population was 1,050,688. Montgomery County is also one of Maryland’s most diverse counties. In 2019, people of color comprised 37% of the County’s total population (Figure 4), and this number is projected to steadily increase to an estimated 63% by 2025 and to 73% by 2045.21

Montgomery County also has a large and diverse foreign-born population, comprising 32.3% of the total population in 201922 and contributing to the County’s ethnic and linguistic diversity; 40% of the County’s residents speak a language other than English at home,23 including Spanish, Mandarin, Hindi, Korean, Amharic, Farsi, and Vietnamese. In 2016, the County’s largest foreign-born populations were from El Salvador (14%), China (8%), India (7%), Korea (4%), Ethiopia (4%), Vietnam (4%), Honduras (3%), Peru (3%), Iran (2%), and Guatemala (2%).24

Much of Montgomery County’s population growth has been concentrated along major transit and transportation corridors, such as Interstate 495 (I-495) of the Capital Beltway, and near Metro stations. The areas with the highest population density include Takoma Park, Silver Spring, Bethesda, Germantown, Gaithersburg, Rockville, and Aspen Hill.25
The age distribution of Montgomery County’s residents is shown in Figure 4. The median age in 2018 was 39 years, in contrast to the median age of 34 years in 1990. Aging baby boomers are driving an increase in the County’s median age as well as the median age of the County’s older adult population (i.e., 65+). In 2019, this group made up 16% of the County’s population and that percentage is estimated to increase to 21% by 2040. Conversely, there is a sizeable youth population in the County—almost a quarter of the population is made up of 5- to 17-year-old residents.

Income and Employment
Montgomery County is considered an affluent area that attracts well-educated residents with high earning potential. For example, in 2019, 59% of adults over 25 years of age held a bachelor’s or higher degree. Montgomery County’s labor force participation rate was 71.1% in 2019, ranking second in the metropolitan area of Washington, DC, region in terms of its total labor-force size. In addition, the County’s median household income is $106,287, which is higher than that of Maryland as a whole. However, there are a number of less affluent communities in Montgomery County in which median income and unemployment rates vary by race. In 2018, White households in the County had the highest median income ($122,291), followed by Asian ($101,830), Hispanic ($70,100), and Black ($69,313) households. In 2017, Black residents in the County experienced the highest unemployment rates (5.6%), followed by Hispanic (4%), and Asian and White (both at 2.3%). In addition, a sizable portion of the County’s population lives in poverty (7%), and this is an almost two-fold increase since 1989 (4%).

Homeownership and Housing
Homeownership in Montgomery County has declined since 1990, and only 65.4% of residents live in owner-occupied housing. While household incomes have largely remained the same or in some cases decreased since 1990 (e.g., both Hispanic and Black American median household incomes have declined from 1989 levels), house prices have increased (e.g., the average sale value of a detached home in Montgomery County increased by 65% between 1997 and 2017). In 2017, Asian residents had the highest rate of homeownership (74.3%) in Montgomery County, followed by White (73.2%), Hispanic (49.1%), and Black (42.3%) residents.

A further burden for low-income and very-low-income households is the lack of affordable housing in Montgomery County—with demand outgrowing supply. In addition, Montgomery County does not exercise County-wide rent control for rented residences (although the City of Takoma Park does exercise rent control), thus, there is no limit on the amount a landlord can demand for leasing a home or renewing a lease. This only adds to the financial uncertainty experienced by lower-income residents in the County and the burdens on them.

In 2018, the majority of low-income households in Montgomery County lived in multifamily homes (55%), followed by single-family detached homes (23%), single-family attached homes (17%), and small multifamily homes (5%). Low-income households are also more likely to live in housing built before 1950, which may contain lead-based paint and require lead-safe work practices when installing energy efficiency measures.

Energy
In Maryland, there is a relatively even split between energy used by the commercial, residential, and transportation sectors. In Montgomery County, the majority of low-income households use electricity as their main energy source for heating and cooling purposes (50%), followed by natural gas (45%) and fuel and propane (5%). Of these households, 77% pay directly for their heating and cooling (i.e., the cost is not included in their rent) and, therefore, they are more sensitive to changing demands and costs of these utility services. In addition, households that do not have utility costs included in their rent are more likely to use fuel oil and propane, which are dirtier and more expensive than electricity or natural gas, as their main source of heating.

Many low-income households also experience an “energy burden,” defined as the percentage of household income that goes toward utility bills. Research by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy found that low-income, Black, Hispanic, and Native American households all face dramatically higher energy burdens than the average American household. In addition to lack of income and affordable energy bills, energy burdens can be influenced by many housing factors, such as poor insulation, outdated appliances, and higher utility use needed to make a home more comfortable. High energy burdens can threaten a household’s ability to pay for energy and can force many families to have to choose between paying energy bills or purchasing other household necessities such as food and medicine. See Figure 5 for a map of energy burden in Montgomery County. High energy burdens are also correlated with greater risk for respiratory diseases, increased stress and economic hardship, and difficulty in moving out of poverty.
Another major issue for low-income households is a lack of access to air conditioning and other cooling technologies. As the number of hot days increase as a result of climate change, the threat to climate vulnerable communities will also increase. For example, in Montgomery County, approximately 800 cases of heat-related illnesses were reported from May 22 through September 17, 2018.43 Two key obstacles to cooling access are lack of financial resources and lack of homeownership. Recognizing the impact more frequent hot days can have on its most vulnerable residents, Montgomery County approved its first “air conditioning bill” in February 2020, which requires property owners of rental units to maintain cooling systems in a safe and good working condition and to supply air conditioning service at 80°F or less during the summer months.44 In addition to a lack of cooling and heating options in homes, many residents in Montgomery County highlighted the need for cooling and heating systems in public transit vehicles.

Figure 5: Montgomery County census tracts with median energy burden of 3% or greater as a percentage of income42

Transportation
Single-occupancy vehicle driving is the predominant commute mode for working County residents. In 2016, more than 65% of commuters chose to drive alone.45 However, driving has decreased by 4% since 1990, as other forms of commuting and working have increased in prevalence, such as walking and cycling to work and working from home. Working from home, or “teleworking,” has increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and will likely have lasting impacts on transportation patterns. However, there is a lack of cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, and many residents in Montgomery County have noted safety as a key concern.

Public transit was the second preferred mode of transportation in Montgomery County in 2016; however, despite increases in public transit options, there was only a 3% increase in this commute mode use between 1990 and 2016. Montgomery County is largely covered by both Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Metrorail and County Ride On bus services. WMATA’s Metrorail Red Line serves the major activity centers in the County, including Bethesda, Rockville, Shady Grove, Silver Spring, and Wheaton. The Purple Line, which is currently under construction, will provide light rail service in Montgomery County to areas such as Lyttonsville, Woodside, College Park, and Silver Spring. However, many areas remain underserved by rail, including the Route 29 corridor, Germantown, Clarksburg, and other areas in the northern and western part of the County. Recent implementation of the FLASH Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)-like system along the Route 29 corridor provides greatly improved frequent transit service to that portion of the County. Implementation of a BRT network and other transit such as the Corridor Cities Transitway are planned to provide service to many of these areas.

The lack of a dense network of public transit options disproportionately impacts certain groups in Montgomery County. For example, Black residents are the most likely group to use public transit as a means to get to work (19.8%), followed by White (13.6%), Hispanic (12.8%), and Asian residents (11.7%).46 In addition, Black residents are two times more likely to not own a vehicle in comparison to any other group in the County.47 Therefore, Black residents rely on public transit options more than any other group in Montgomery County. Access to public transit options near homes, schools, and places of employment has been noted as a key issue by many residents. Other key issues include affordability, service quality, and timing issues resulting in long commutes.

Water
Residents and businesses in Montgomery County use a combination of public water and sewer services and private, on-site services (wells and septic systems). This distinction largely depends on location. Households in more densely populated areas of the County are typically connected to public centralized water and sewerage systems (e.g., in the Downcounty region adjacent to the I-495 portion of the Capital Beltway and along the major transportation corridors in the Upcounty area), while households in more rural settings are more likely to have private, on-site water systems.48

Key factors to determining access to quality and safe drinking water include race and income. Recent studies have found that nearly one in two adults and one in four children in the U.S. do not drink tap water on a given day. This situation is pronounced in communities of color and low-income populations. These communities are more likely to be in rural areas with water contaminants and in older housing prone to lead contamination. An additional issue is distrust in tap water, which is heightened among immigrants from countries where tap water is unsafe to drink. Even if the water is safe to drink, if it tastes bad, is discolored, or is dispensed from an old, dirty tap, many communities will consider it unsafe, will therefore not drink it, and will buy bottled water instead. In Montgomery County, the annual cost of water and sewage for low-income households was $573, $18 higher than the state average of $555.49
The health of Montgomery County’s streams, rivers, and lakes is important both for drinking water quality in the County and downstream to the Chesapeake Bay as well as for communities that depend on fishing in local water bodies as a food source for themselves and their neighbors. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has identified at least one impairment in each of the County’s eight major watersheds (i.e., the watersheds do not meet MDE-regulated minimum water quality standards due to excess bacteria, nutrients, and polychlorinated biphenyls). Although MDE releases fish contaminant advisories, the advisories are not always well advertised, so people who rely on local fish for food may not be aware of the water impairment health risks.

**Health**

Many racial and ethnic minorities face challenges in accessing medical care in the U.S. In instances when they do have access to medical care, research reveals systemic differences in the kind and quality of medical care received by different groups. Many residents in Montgomery County have serious concerns about health and well-being. These concerns range from unaffordable and inaccessible health care to the lack of health care-related information and awareness-raising programs. For example, 7.8% of County residents do not have health insurance. When this statistic is broken down by racial group, Hispanics make up the largest portion of residents without health insurance (19.4%), followed by Black (7.3%), Asian (5.8%), and White residents (3.8%). The situation in the County reflects a trend across the U.S., with Hispanics facing greater barriers to health insurance than any other racial group. Residents in Montgomery County experiencing chronic illness and disabilities in particular find the health care system challenging to navigate.

Certain groups are also more susceptible to illnesses. For example, between 2016 and 2018, Black individuals were more likely to contract and die from diabetes, heart disease, and chronic respiratory illnesses than any other groups in Montgomery County.

### Racial Equity and Social Justice

**Approach**

Historical wrongs have played a major role in how communities across Montgomery County are experiencing climate change now and in the future. Although indicators of pre-existing vulnerabilities such as age, race, gender, disability, and chronic health conditions cannot be changed, these characteristics must be considered when undertaking climate change and resilience planning.

For the CAP to achieve a desired and widespread positive impact, it was essential that climate action design and assessment incorporate consideration of racial equity and social justice principles. Social justice implies that harm has been addressed and corrected. To that end, racial equity is one tool to achieve social justice. In discussing and defining these two concepts, it is important to note that different communities are starting from different places. This lens is important for not only shedding light on areas of greatest need but also for strategic development of climate action implementation. The County will develop and deploy the CAP in ways that ensure its implementation makes significant progress toward achievement of racial equity and social justice.

**Racial Equity**

- Transportation Equity
- Critical Infrastructure
- Planning and Zoning
- Food Security
- Emergency Management
- Green Jobs
- Inclusive Decision-Making
- Pollution-Emitting Sources
- Green and Safe Spaces

**Social Justice**

- Inclusion
- Meaningful Engagement
- Accessibility
- Education
- Minority Business Enterprises
- Partnerships
- Workforce Development
- Strengthen Community Partnerships and Ownership
- Capacity Building

To ensure that equity is at the center of the CAP and its recommended actions, the County used the following approach:

1. **Secondary research** was analyzed to develop a robust understanding of the current condition in Montgomery County, including U.S. Census data and other relevant reports and studies. An overview of current conditions is presented in *Montgomery County’s Socioeconomic Profile*.

2. **Social vulnerability** was defined in the context of climate change, based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC’s) Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), and considered in the CAP.

3. **Engagement** with County and community organizations as well as community discussions with Resilience Ambassadors was undertaken to bring in additional, diverse voices to inform the development of equity-enhancing measures and to ground-truth priority actions and identify blind spots.

4. As part of the **co-benefits scoring method**, all actions were evaluated based on their contribution to Racial Equity and Social Justice.

5. **Equity-enhancing measures** were developed to supplement priority actions, to ensure actions truly responded to the key issues and priorities of Montgomery County’s most climate vulnerable communities, to ensure that racial equity and social justice principles were considered when designing and finalizing actions, and to ensure that climate vulnerable groups were considered from a benefits perspective.
Highlights from Community Conversations

Table 2 identifies the key issues and priorities highlighted during engagement with County communities and Resilience Ambassadors, and includes several critical areas, such as community health and safety, housing, education and awareness, and accessibility. The key priorities identified through community conversations outline an approach for addressing key issues in the County as the CAP actions are further developed.

Table 2: Key community issues and priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Issues</th>
<th>Key Priorities</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of financial resources and job opportunities</td>
<td>Additional resources for underserved populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High cost of technology (upfront and maintenance)</td>
<td>Increased awareness of climate change and its impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of education and/or awareness of climate change and public health</td>
<td>Improved language accessibility and transparency in communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient and inequitable community engagement</td>
<td>Community empowerment, living to one’s full potential</td>
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<tr>
<td>Misinformation due to language barriers</td>
<td>Community “suggestion boxes” to amplify voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of homeownership, home, and/or renter’s insurance</td>
<td>Rental assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disincentivized landlords</td>
<td>Greater landlord accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eviction and/or fear of eviction</td>
<td>Insulation, and access to heating and cooling technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness and lack of affordable housing and County-wide rent control</td>
<td>Affordable housing and rental assistance for those in need and County-wide rent control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood segregation</td>
<td>Improved public transit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of access to alternative sources of power</td>
<td>Electric public transit vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High utility costs</td>
<td>Bike paths and better, safer pedestrian infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of vehicle ownership</td>
<td>Clean and safe green public spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient public transportation options and public transit accessibility</td>
<td>Promotion of physical and mental well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety concerns while on public transit or walking; dangerous sidewalk and crosswalk infrastructure</td>
<td>Consideration of Indigenous and alternative methods of conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to pollutant-emitting sites, including pollution from vehicles</td>
<td>Resources for community gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of health insurance and/or high medical costs</td>
<td>Better learning environments for children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health issues and past trauma</td>
<td>County-community partnerships and more types of outreach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chronic health issues and disabilities</td>
<td>Use of existing community ambassadors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Childcare and early childhood education concerns</td>
<td>Safety enforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food insecurity</td>
<td>Consideration of bold and innovative ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pests and mold</td>
<td>Overcome existing stereotypes and stigmas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outdated and failing community and school infrastructure</td>
<td>Solution-oriented actions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of opportunities for disabled and homeless residents</td>
<td>More opportunities for disabled and homeless residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrust of government and misunderstanding of systems, and concern about lack of representation at high levels of government</td>
<td>Increased diversity within the County and celebration of the County’s diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood segregation and education inequities; gentrification</td>
<td>Sense of community and place</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flooding concerns</td>
<td>Supportive, welcoming and humane culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extreme heat and disproportionate exposure to frontline workers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Racial Equity and Social Justice

What We Heard

“COVID-19 highlighted that people can change. There are people walking and biking... now imagine if they felt safe to do this regularly.”

“Tenants often feel powerless and are left to deal with real-life consequences that are created from flooding in their homes without having support from landlords.”

“Homeless people need to be protected from climate emergencies.”

“Many people are out of work or earning less due to COVID-19, and there is an increasing trade-off between health and well-being, and cost.”

“People bring the trauma of the situations they left behind, and communities of color continue to deal with systemic racism. Trauma and mental health are key in all of this.”

“Our government doesn’t have enough representation. We need more Black and Brown voices in positions of power since the majority of the County is composed of People of Color.”

“Many immigrant households have a certain fear or apprehension associated with the medical system... and may not know how to navigate it appropriately.”

“Montgomery County CAP

Recommendations to Improve Community Engagement

By engaging with community members, the County received significant feedback on ways to improve communication and engagement between County officials and the local community. The key recommendations are listed below, and are captured in the Public Engagement, Partnerships, and Education actions.

Practice Proactive and Intentional Engagement

- Relationships with community members have historically been transactional in nature and need to be more intentional.
- There is a community preference for early and proactive—rather than late and reactive—engagement. Engage at a stage where the community can provide input such that it can shape plans or actions.
- Provide additional outreach opportunities and support residents in raising their voices. Suggestions include a suggestion-box-style website, regular community surveys, and newsletters and/or emails.
- Be prepared to provide solutions and resources for residents, and work with residents to develop solutions together.

Build a Connection

- Approach the community with the intent to listen.
- Take residents’ concerns seriously and make good faith attempts to act on those concerns.
- Building relationships and trust requires time and effort, and the process cannot be rushed.
- Work with community leaders who have considerable understanding of and influence in the community.

Seek and Elevate Diverse Voices

- There is a tendency for feedback to be provided by the same group within the community. Suggested approaches include providing incentives for participation time (e.g., stipends, gift cards, travel reimbursement) or offering dependent care services or food during meetings or engagement events.
- Engage with diverse community organizations that focus on topics such as environmental justice, public health, civil and racial rights, faith issues, economic development, and other areas of community concern.

Practice Inclusive Engagement Strategies

- Use nontraditional methods to meet and engage with community members; for example, go to places where they live, ride, shop, or work as well as virtual meeting settings.
- Use shared and simple language to make the link between climate risks and other risks more prominent and understandable to the community (e.g., highlight the health impacts and costs of climate change impacts).
- Ensure information is disseminated in the language(s) of the community (English and Spanish at a minimum; other languages could include Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Vietnamese, Farsi, French, and Amharic).
- Build campaigns and incentives based on people’s cultural practices, such as growing food at home or in their gardens.
To submit feedback on the Draft CAP, please visit the Comment Box on the Welcome Table.